Official Groundbreaking Ceremony
for the
Bioengineering and Bioscience Building
Georgia Institute of Technology
May 1, 1998

Remarks by
President G. Wayne Clough

Good morning and welcome to a landmark event in the history of Georgia Tech, the official groundbreaking of the Bioengineering and Biosciences building.

At today's ceremony, we will not only break ground for a new building, but celebrate a major step in the evolution of our programs in bioengineering and biosciences, one which confirms Georgia Tech's commitment to this field as a principal endeavor for the future. In addition, this building will be an important step in support of Atlanta and Georgia's entry into the burgeoning commercial world of biotechnology. The work to be conducted in this building will not only increase knowledge and stimulate the economy; it will have the capacity to radically improve the quality of life of a world in which the average lifespan has been extended by thirty years in just the past fifty years.

It is easy to cite the great contributions that Georgia Tech engineers and scientists have made in the past in areas like manufacturing, the delivery of electrical power, aerospace and transportation. In each case Georgia Tech helped make these endeavors into competitive businesses for Atlanta and Georgia. Now imagine that talent and creativity applied to:

- Growing new arteries to restore vitality once lost to a human heart.
- Using telecommunications to allow a world-renowned surgeon in Atlanta to assist in the surgery of a patient in the most remote place in this state;
- Reducing or eliminating the tragedy of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.
- Creating a bioartificial pancreas for diabetes sufferers as an alternative to insulin; and
- Helping defeat cancer and sickle cell anemia.

Those are just some of the goals we hope to achieve within this new building. We firmly believe that if the future is anything like the past, we will soon transform those goals from dreams into reality.

Biotechnology is an area where Georgia Tech's unique interdisciplinary strengths and entrepreneurial abilities in engineering, science, and computing correspond to external opportunities. Even without the new building, our programs in biotechnology are already recognized among the best in the nation. But this new building will allow our faculty and students to compete on an even footing for the first time. It will bring together the diverse entities on our campus working on biotechnology and pool their talents in a way that few universities other than Georgia Tech can do.

We are fortunate to have a stalwart partner in our endeavor. For over a decade, Emory University's world-class School of Medicine faculty has teamed with Georgia Tech engineers and scientists in joint research efforts. Our new building will be a highly visible home to our recently created joint Georgia Tech/Emory University department of biomedical engineering. Today I would like to thank Emory; our partnership sets a powerful standard

for others to follow.

Being in the forefront of biotech research, means enormous potential benefits for Georgia Tech, for Atlanta, the state of Georgia, and for our society. By the year 2015, biotechnology as a commercial enterprise will be a $600 billion industry and one of the largest employment segments in the nation. Yet translating the knowledge creation to economic development is far from guaranteed in most universities. But Tech's know-how in this process will be extended to the new building by the inclusion of a business incubator to create biotechnology start-up companies.

Along with the potential inherent in this building—for Georgia Tech, for Atlanta, for Georgia, and for our society—there also comes enormous opportunity for the heart of Georgia Tech—our students. With this new building, we offer them the chance to work with world-class researchers and teachers and to have a career in this important field.

The future is bright indeed with the arrival of this new Bioengineering and Biosciences building. It will be the vehicle that will help us accelerate our journey to be one of the very best in this challenging and exciting field.

The following groups deserve our utmost appreciation for they are the ones who have brought us to this point. To the Whitaker Foundation, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, the Georgia Research Alliance, the Georgia Tech Foundation and the Georgia Tech Research Corporation all of whom helped fund the building; to Mr. Parker "Pete" Petit for endowing the Institute for Bioengineering and Biosciences whose programs will drive the intellectual endeavors; to Professor Robert Nerem, Dean Jean-Lou Chameau, Professor Donald Giddens, Dean Gary Schuster, Provost Michael Thomas and the bioengineering and biosciences faculty for their creative vision of the building; to Mr. Robert Thompson, Mr. Steven Swant, Mr. William Miller and Mr. Charles Rhode for exemplary planning and execution; to Chancellor Stephen Portch and his staff and the USG Board of Regents for their help in gaining state approval for construction and providing the funds for upkeep for the building; and finally to Beers Construction and Helmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum architects for its design and construction.

To conclude, groundbreakings can sometimes be viewed as rudimentary exercises, and having engaged in more than my fair share over the years, I am inclined to agree with that sentiment. But they are important events and it is good for us to reflect on what they portend. Almost 110 years ago on a site about 800 yards from here, members of the tech commission and the trustees of the Georgia School of Technology, gathered inside a new academic building where a polished 40 horsepower steam engine awaited. A steam whistle was sounded at noon and Miss Nellie Inman, escorted by former Governor McDaniel, opened the throttle to start the engine that powered the shop machinery as the crowd applauded. Imagine how thrilled they were on that October day in 1888, the official opening of the Georgia School of Technology.

Consider now just how far we have come: so too how far this city and this state have come. The direction that the state of Georgia took to establish the Georgia School of Technology changed the course of history for our region and transformed the dreams for a new South into a reality. Today, we too break ground on a new direction and a new reality.

Thank you.